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TOOLBOX TALKS

Heavy Workload, Heavy Risk

Growth of the industry directly or indirectly creates a high-pressure environment with so much to get done and with not enough resources. The motto is always “more with less.”

During construction of a solar site, there were multiple crews and activities going on. There was a truck of PV modules (panels) that had arrived and needed to be unloaded. Since the unload area already had numerous pallets staged there was limited space for the forklift operator to maneuver.

While unloading the pallets, one toppled from on top of the other falling. There was a worker that was crushed in between pallets nearby when that happened and was unfortunately killed.

The forklift driver was unaware of an individual performing an inspection and getting serial numbers of the panels and there was no spotter or flagger for the forklift.



Since individuals are stretched for time, they are also stretched in their awareness and attention. Not managing the workload properly can be an individual or organizational Human Performance error that can lead to unnecessary risks, injuries, or fatalities. Taking the time to ensure all personnel on site are aware of the work going on around them.

Here are some tips for managing heavy workloads:

- Collaborate and communicate amongst the site team. In this case there were several scopes of work in the same area that were not aware of the other.
- Determine your priorities. In this case if the priority were unloading pallets, the worker inspecting the pallets should have waited or could have been the spotter.
- Know your limits. This could be simply understanding the resources available and what can be accomplished safely.
- Develop an organizational strategy to ensure those around you are aware of your scope.
- Focus on one thing at a time. If there are instances of time pressure or high-risk situations this can make all the difference.
- Schedule your tasks with the right number of resources.

During daily work, do you have a good understanding of your work priorities?

Do you feel you have too many tasks to reasonably complete safely?

If not, have you discussed this with supervision?

